

Skills for Learning

**Guide to Employability Skills**

Your time at university is designed to help you develop your knowledge and skills, not only academically but as part of a broader experience equipping you with not just skills for learning, but skills for work and skills for life.

Obviously, you will acquire a good working knowledge and expertise within your subject area, but you will also develop more generic graduate skills that are widely valued in the workplace and will contribute greatly to your success in your future career and life as a whole.

Employers increasingly expect these employability skills whether you are entering a profession specific to your degree or a more general graduate entry stream. When you begin to look for work, or even placements and internships, you will find the typical graduate job advertisement asking for a wide range of them.

As you progress through your degree, you will have many opportunities to develop these skills through both your academic study and your outside commitments, whether part-time work, caring, recreation or managing finances and general student life. The key to this is recognising what these skills are and planning ahead to ensure you graduate with the full set of competencies to get you the job you really want. This means taking the right decisions, organising yourself effectively and having the self-commitment and self-belief to succeed.

A good starting point is to think about the course you are studying, and how your assignments, lectures, essays and other academic activities help build these graduate skills.

Gaining Skills Through Academic Study

Your academic activities at university are designed to help you develop key graduate skills alongside acquiring knowledge and expertise in your subject area. For example, all degree subjects contain an element of problem solving and analysis through a wide range of activities.

For some assignments, you may be required to fact-find or decide the best approach for carrying out research for an essay or dissertation. For others, you may need to work out the best way forward for a group project, perform a risk assessment for a practical project or solve an engineering problem. From these activities, you should therefore learn to analyse facts critically, make informed decisions and to find solutions to work around obstacles and achieve your goal.

The table on the next page gives a guide to how you can build these skills through your study activities. You will also find that good IT skills, along with numeracy and literacy, are a prerequisite for most graduate jobs

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| **Planning and organisational**Time managementPrioritisingSetting goals and achieving themPlanning: breaking things down into tasksDecision makingMeeting deadlinesManaging your resources: notes, online sources, journals and books, research data, references | **Problem solving and analytical**Understanding the questionPlanning methodicallyResearching: gathering, analysing and using informationMaking conjectures Drawing conclusionsAnticipating / troubleshooting problemsBeing flexible / able to adjust plans |
| **Written Communication**Understanding and following written instructionsClearly communicating facts / ideasSummarisingShowing awareness of intended audienceWriting academicallyProducing reports and documents to specific formats and stylesAttention to detailUsing vocabulary / terminology specific to subject area | **Verbal Communication**Articulate and able to communicate viewpoint Good listening skillsAwareness of others values / beliefsSummarising skillsQuestioning skillsGood body languageAwareness of audienceOne to one communication skillsPresentation skills |
| **Teamwork**Excellent verbal communicationPersuading and negotiating- ability to put across own ideas and accept/dispute other peoplesRespect for alternative points of viewSelf-awareness and AssertivenessAbility to accept constructive criticismTime management | **Leadership**Excellent interpersonal skillsMotivate and inspire othersPlanning and decision makingCoordinate team workValue team members and promote their developmentInitiative |
| **Intellectual / creative ability**Critically analyse and evaluate informationDevelop a line of reasoned argumentUse appropriate academic languageLateral thinkingOpen to new concepts / ideasAble to keep abreast of subjectApplying knowledge in new waysForming new ideas from current practice/knowledge | **Self-awareness / self-reliance**Self-motivated / confidentIntegrity and assertivenessNetworking skillsAware of strengths and weaknessesAble to action-plan and self-manageOpen to new opportunitiesAble to handle and manage changeWilling to learn |

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